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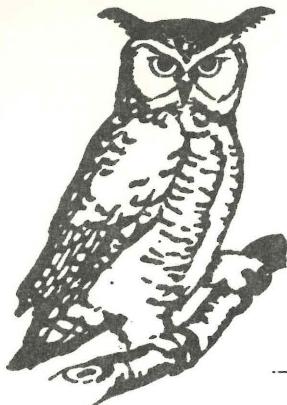
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Naturalist Notebook

STACKS

JUNE  
1968





# NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

JUNE 1968

VOLUME III

NO. 6

## CONTENTS

Front Cover:

Yellow Lady Slipper  
R. Dewire, Photo

Back Cover:

Summer 1967

## CHILDREN'S SECTION

Nature Calendar .....	1
Children's Corner .....	3
A Day In The Fields.....	5
Rock Hounds.....	9

## ADULT SECTION

Articles of Adult Interest..	10
Field Notes .....	12
Your Own Family Nature Jaunt .....	15

## ACTIVITIES FOR JUNE

....Inside back cover.

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JOHN F. GARDNER — *Executive Director*  
ROBERT C. DEWIRE — *Naturalist*

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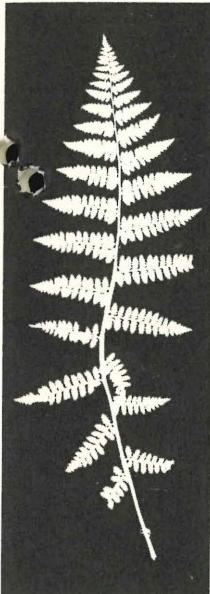
The Thames Science Center is a non-profit organization seeking a quality environment through education.

The active support of children and adults in the Science Center, its programs, activities and efforts is earnestly solicited.

JOHN F. GARDNER  
*Editor*

The Interpretive Museum of 622 Williams Street, New London, Connecticut 06320  
The Peace Sanctuary Nature Preserve At 200 River Road, Mystic, Connecticut 06355

# JUNE'S NATURE CALENDAR



JUNE is the month of ferns. There are many interesting and different kinds of ferns growing in our area. By this month all of the ferns have opened up and can be found for the rest of the summer. This is an advantage that these plants have over wildflowers, in that the flowers are only in bloom for a short period of time and then disappear until the following year.

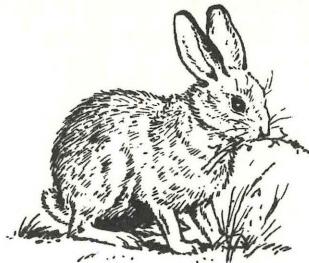
There are at least 30 species of ferns growing within New London County. Different ferns can be found if you go into different types of areas. On rocky ledges you can find a small evergreen fern called polypody. Shaded hill-sides are the place to find Christmas fern and woodferns. In the deep woods there are cinnamon, interrupted, New York and lady ferns. Open fields will be the area to find bracken, grape and hay-scented ferns. In swampy areas and along the edges of ponds and streams there are marsh, long beech, royal and sensitive ferns.

Most of these plants are quite easy to tell apart and with the aid of a book on identifying ferns it is a lot of fun to see how many you can find on a single piece of property.

# JUNE'S

## NATURE

### CALENDAR



June is the month of nesting birds and hot lazy days.

June 1... The planet Uranus will be visible after 9:45 P.M. below the back part of the constellation Leo and may be seen with low power binoculars throughout this month.

June 2-17... Meteor showers can be expected in the vicinity of the constellation Scorpius.

June 3... Painted Turtles lay eggs underground in open areas near the ponds they live in.

June 5... Mountain Laurel, the Connecticut State Flower, is in bloom.

June 6... Least Bitterns are nesting at Barn Is.

June 8... Pitcher Plants are in flower in boggy areas.

June 10... The full moon, called the "hot moon", is out this evening.

June 13... The planet Jupiter will be visible with the naked eye very close to Regulus in the constellation Leo.

June 14... Bats can be seen chasing insects at dusk.

June 16-26... The longest days of the year - 15 hours and 18 minutes.

June 21... Summer begins at 3:13 A. M.

June 23... Osprey young are hopefully visible in the several nests present in the area.

June 25... Most resident songbirds are feeding their young by this time.

June 30... Barn Swallows feeding young out of the nest.

# THE CHILDREN'S CORNER

by TRUDY GARDNER



POISON IVY

"Leaflets three, let it be!"

Poison ivy can be found growing in most any place. It might be found in dry fields and rocky ground or on rich croplands or deep woods. Most often you will see it growing along fences or stone walls.

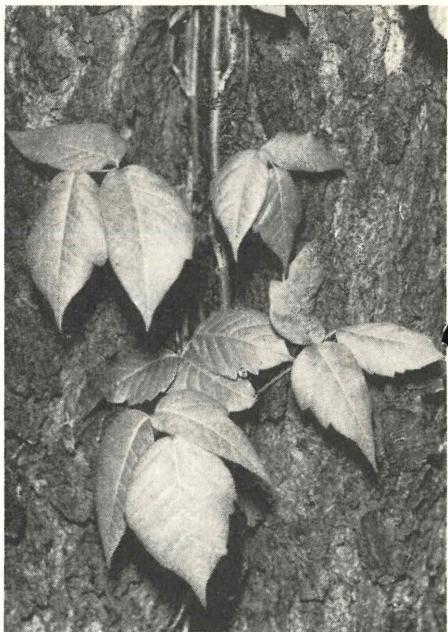
This is a very unfriendly plant. All parts of the plant contain a poison called uroshiol. It is a yellow oil which causes blisters and swelling along with itching. The skin must come in direct contact with the dangerous oil or with the smoke from burning.

Poison ivy leaves always come in groups of three's. This is called a compound leaf because it is actually one leaf that has been split into three parts. Ivy is usually found as a vine climbing up trees or over walls and fences, but it also grows as a shrub. As a vine Virginia creeper is often mistaken for it, but the creeper has five leaflets, not three. There is a saying to help remember this difference: "You can shake hands with five fingers but not three".

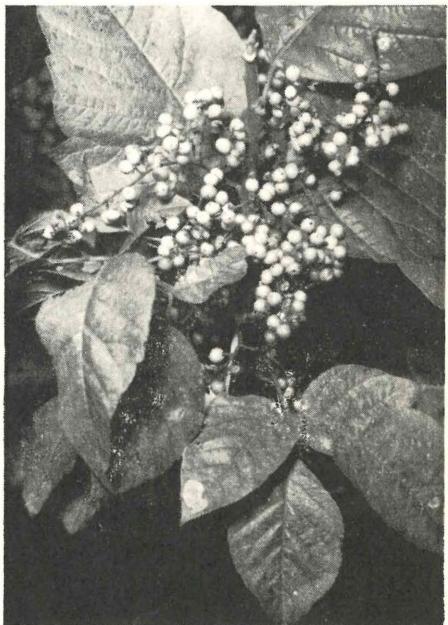
Leaves are in clusters of three.

The plant is poisonous all seasons of the year. Because of this you should get to recognize its differences as the seasons change. In the spring the leaves are a shiny dark red when they first come out. By the end of May they have turned bright green and remain that way throughout the summer. In the fall the leaves again turn red and the plant has clusters of small white berries on it. The leaves fall off as winter comes but the berries remain on the plant and become the important identifying mark.

Even though poison ivy is dreaded by many humans, it is nevertheless important as a wildlife food. There are over 60 species of birds including the bobwhite and pheasant that eat the berries.



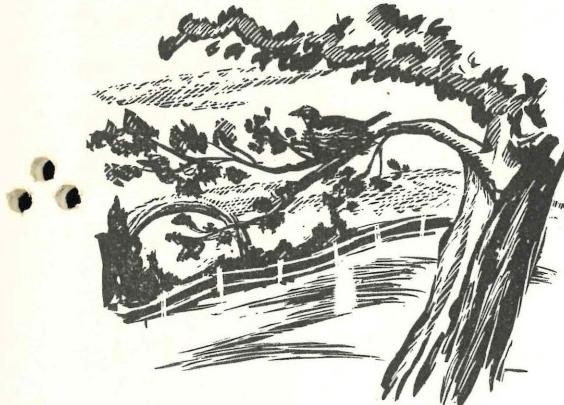
Poison Ivy has white berries.



# A Day in the FIELDS

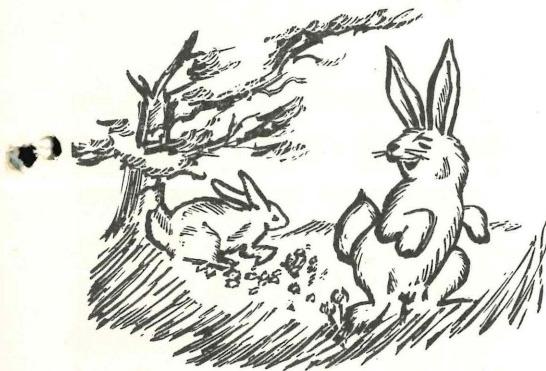
by DOROTHY JANE GOULDING

ILLUSTRATED BY RICHARD BROWN

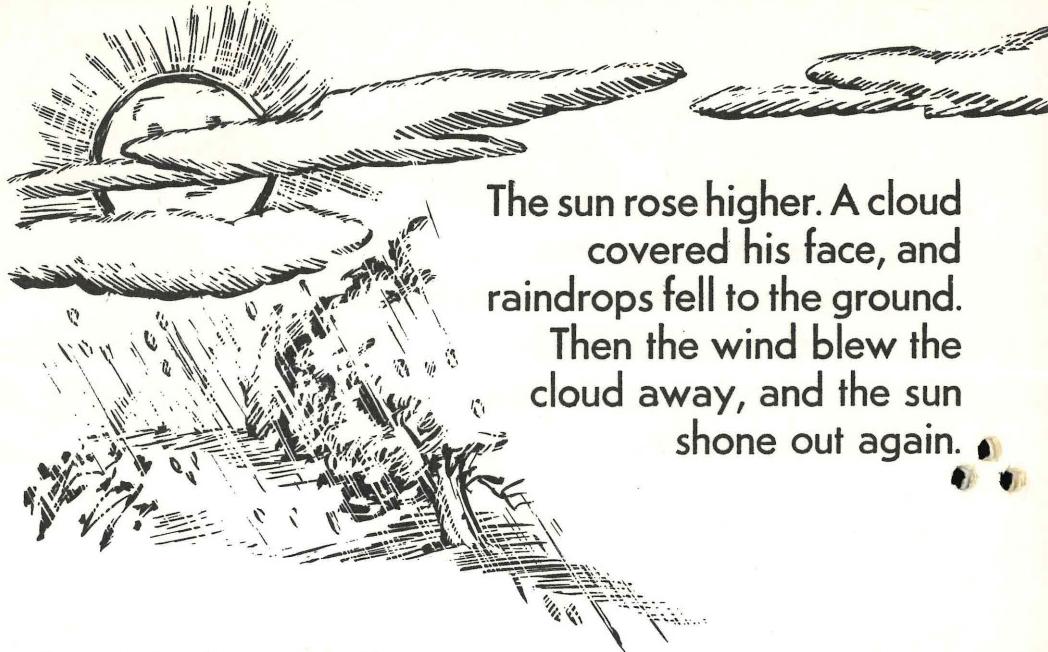


The sun turned the sky pink one morning, as he peered over the edge of the world. "What a nice field," he thought, looking down.

The birds twittered sleepily in the rosy light. A meadow lark flew up into the morning sky. "Wake up," whispered the flowers to each other, as one by one they opened their petals to his warm yellow fingers.

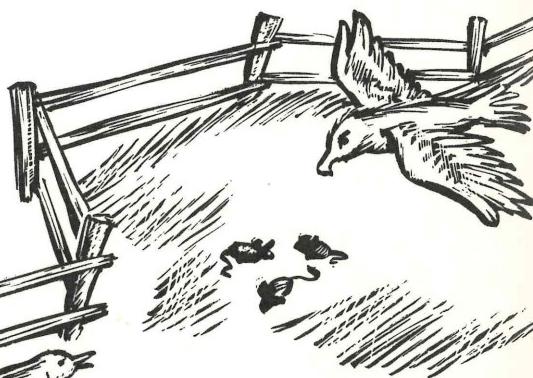
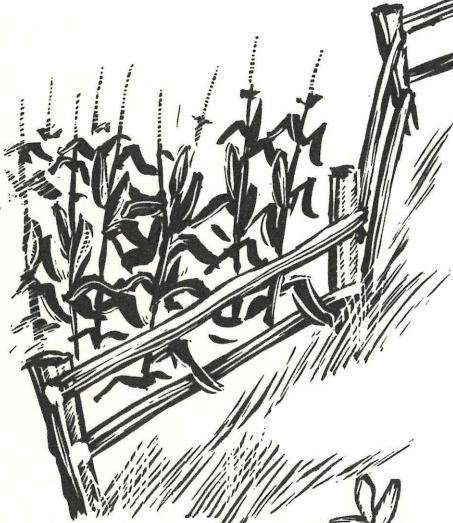


The owls had gone back to their holes in the trees, and now the rabbits came out to nibble the fresh clover. The dew on the grass made one bunny sneeze—"A-tishoo."



The sun rose higher. A cloud  
covered his face, and  
raindrops fell to the ground.  
Then the wind blew the  
cloud away, and the sun  
shone out again.

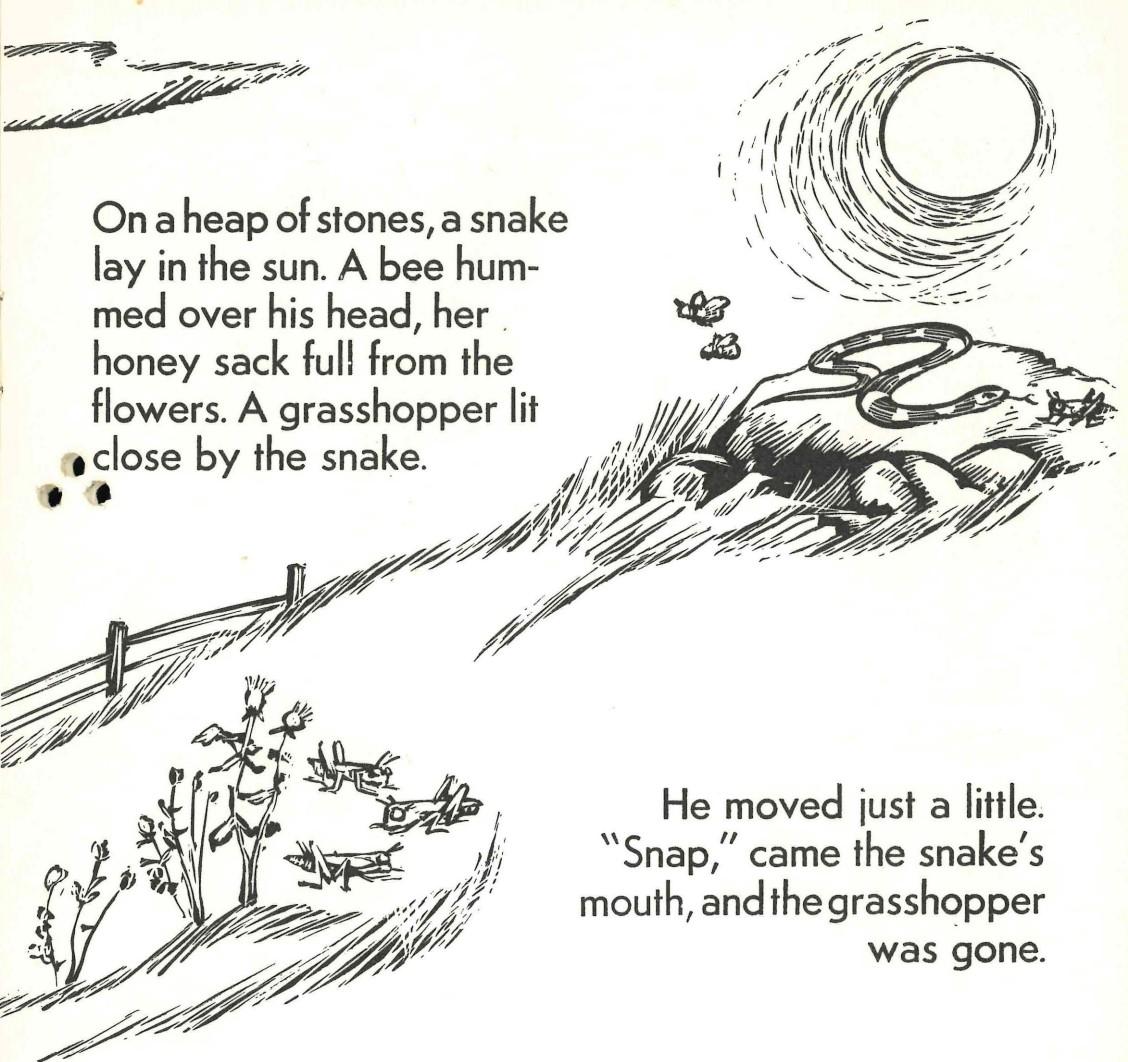
A hawk high in the sky  
watched for mice. Suddenly,  
down he dropped and  
caught one. "Lunch for my  
family," thought the hawk,  
as he flew home.



A killdeer flew from the  
fence, crying his song. On  
the other side, corn was  
growing, and by now it was  
almost ripe. No wonder  
the field mice liked living  
there.

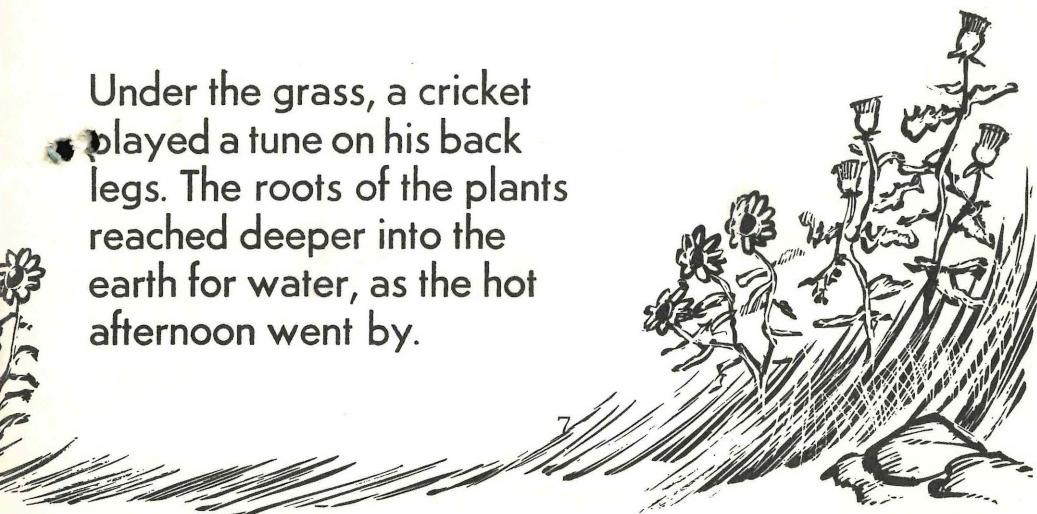


On a heap of stones, a snake lay in the sun. A bee hummed over his head, her honey sack full from the flowers. A grasshopper lit close by the snake.



He moved just a little. "Snap," came the snake's mouth, and the grasshopper was gone.

Under the grass, a cricket played a tune on his back legs. The roots of the plants reached deeper into the earth for water, as the hot afternoon went by.



"Goodnight, field," said the sun, as he began to set, turning the sky pink again. "Time to sleep," twittered mother bird to her babies in their nest. But the owls and the bats flew out into the twilight to find their dinners.



The grass was wet with dew, and the ground drank the dampness thirstily. The raccoons came out for their night's hunting. The day in the field was over.



Most of the flowers closed their petals, as the light faded. But some sent waves of perfume out into the night air. "Come and fetch our honey and pollen," they were calling to the night insects.



# **ROCK HOUNDS**

*by JERRY THEILER*

## Specific Gravity

The specific gravity of a mineral simply refers to how many times a mineral is heavier than an equal amount of water. This article will explain how to find the specific gravity, but it is not always really necessary to do this. Often we can just use common terms such as light, medium or heavy.

After checking the specific gravities of minerals a few times, many collectors just have to lift a specimen and they can guess whether it is light, medium or heavy. In a mineral book, a specific gravity of 1-3 would be light, 3-5 medium or over 5 would be heavy.

If a more accurate measurement of specific gravity is needed it can be found in this way:

1. Weigh the mineral in the air.
2. Weigh the mineral completely submerged in water.
3. Subtract the water weight from the air weight.
4. Divide the answer of Step 3 by the weight in air and the number will be the specific gravity.

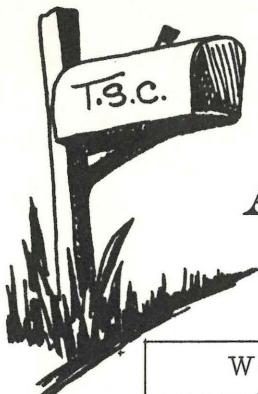
### EXAMPLE:

Air weight 6oz. (Step 1)

Water weight 4oz. (Step 2)

6 - 4 = 2oz. (Step 3)

$\frac{2}{6} = 3.3$  = specific gravity (Step 4)



# ARTICLES OF ADULT INTEREST

We welcome notice of Conservation activities or problems for inclusion in this section of the Naturalist's Notebook.... Please let us know of your local activity so that others may be aware of your efforts and lend their support where possible....

SUMMER PROGRAM: Enrollment in the Science Center's Summer Program will close on June 21st. Programs for grades 1 thru 6 this year will be at the Peace Sanctuary, Mystic July 8-19, East Lyme-Flanders area July 22-August 2 and the Connecticut Arboretum August 5-16. Special Junior High Programs are Session I July 1-6 and Session II August 19-23. Enrollment is limited and will be on a first come first serve basis. Indications are that sessions will fill prior to the closing date.

OBSERVATIONS NEEDED.... Last year 1, 342 adult Common and Roseate Terns were banded on Great Gull Island, a research sanctuary operated by the American Museum of Natural History and The Linnaean Society of New York and located in Long Island Sound about 7 miles northeast of Orient Point, Long Island.

Each bird was given a U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service aluminum band and three colored bands so that individuals could be recognized in the field. The colors used were red, white, blue, green, yellow and black.

This year anyone sighting Common or Roseate Terns in the period from May to September are asked to check to see if the birds are color banded. As the bands are not readily seen, it is advisable to take a second look. Sightings would help answer the following questions:

May 1-5: Where do the terns congregate prior to their arrival at Great Gull Island?

May 21-July 16: How far do the terns go to fish? Are any of the terns banded on Great Gull Island in 1967 now nesting in other colonies?

July 16-Sept. 30: Where do these terns go in their post-nesting dispersal?

Color combinations should be recorded, if they can be read. Begin with the left leg. The top band is read first. For example, left leg: red over blue; right leg: yellow over aluminum. Please also record the date and locality and the bird's activity (flying, fishing).

Please send information to Catherine Pessino, The American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, N. Y. 10024, or to the Thames Science Center, 622 Williams Street, New London, Conn. 06320.

It is with deep regret that we note the passing of a member of the Science Center Board of Directors -

DR. KEMPTON G. WING

His service to and support of the Science Center and its programs will be sadly missed.

# FIELD NOTES

April 15 - May 15

The warmer weather this spring has resulted in flowers appearing much earlier than last year. Birds have arrived very slowly and in small numbers. To date, no migration flocks have been noted.

Essex and Lyme: JACK-IN-THE-PULPITS were in flower at the Meadowoods Natural Area in Essex on April 23rd. An immature BALD EAGLE has been present on Great Is. since May 5th.

Niantic, Waterford and New London: Flowers and their blooming dates are as follows:  
April 18 - DUTCHMAN'S BREECHES, HEPATICA and BLOODROOT. April 21st - SHADBUSH. April 29th - PURPLE TRILLIUM, FOAMFLOWER and WILD GINGER. May 2nd - APPLE. May 7th - DOGWOOD. May 11th - YELLOW LADYSLIPPER. May 12th - PINK LADYSLIPPER. May 15th - MAYAPPLE and SWAMP AZALEA.

First arriving birds and their locations and dates are as follows:

Arboretum - BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER and PARULA WARBLER on April 30th; BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER and LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH on May 3rd; WHITE-EYED VIREO on May 7th; SCARLET TANAGER on May 11th.

Thames Science Center - BLUE-WINGED and NASHVILLE WARBLERS on May 6th and a ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK on May 9th.

Mitchell's Woods - BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER on April 17th; RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET on April 24th; SOLITARY VIREO on April 30th; BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER on May 2nd.

Harkness Park - CHIPPING SPARROWS on April 17th; SNOWY EGRETS on April 20th; GREEN HERON on April 29th; YELLOW WARBLER on May 5th; LEAST SANDPIPERs on May 9th; BOBOLINKS on May 15th.

Two winter birds of interest noted at Harkness during this period are a female GOLDENEYE that arrived in the inlet on May 9th and is still present at this writing and a remarkable male COMMON EIDER which was at the inlet on April 28th.

Magonk Point - ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS were present on April 20th; CHIMNEY SWIFTS on April 29th; OVENBIRD on May 1st; HUMMINGBIRD on May 2nd; CATBIRD and REDSTART on May 5th. A young male ORCHARD ORIOLE was at Magonk Point from May 1st to May 7th.

The first VEERY of the year was singing at Mary Butler Drive on May 7th.

Groton and Ledyard: A RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH was located in the pines at the Groton Filtration Plant on April 19th. A YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON was present on Bluff Point on April 20th. LEAST FLYCATCHERS arrived in Ledyard on May 4th.

Mystic and Stonington: A BLACKSNAKE was seen at Barn Island on April 20th. At the Peace Sanctuary NODDING TRILLIUM flowered on May 11th and WILD GERANIUMS bloomed on the 14th. A CRESTED FLYCATCHER was present on the 4th along with a SPOTTED SANDPIPER that was seen along the river by the sanctuary. BLUEBIRDS are nesting in the field just north of the sanctuary. COMMON TERNS arrived in Noank on May 5th and an ORCHARD ORIOLE was reported from May 1st on at Willow Point in West Mystic. One CATTLE EGRET was seen following the cows around at the Stone Acre Farm on April 20th. At Barn Island

highlights included the first BARN SWALLOW on April 20th, LEAST TERNS on May 5th along with several WOODCOCK performing and a WHIPPOORWILL, a LOUISIANA HERON on May 7th and a NIGHTHAWK on May 8th. The first BALTIMORE ORIOLE was seen in Stonington Village on May 1st and the first CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER was there on May 2nd.

Rhode Island Shoreline: At Napatree Point BRANT numbers remained at 300+ birds. BANK SWALLOWS arrived there on May 3rd and a WHIMBREL was there on May 3rd and 12th. An OLDSQUAW was still present on May 12th, also at the point.

Contributors to this column were: Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Bates, Grace Bissell, Lawrence Brooks, Carol Chappell, Robert Dewire, Warren Fish, John and Trudy Gardner, Helen Gilman, Rick Holloway, Capt. John Kinsey, Sam Knox, Mary Laffargue, Maynard Peterson, Paul Spitzer, and Mary Jean Williams.

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## — COMMENT —

The Thames Science Center is a private, non-profit organization chartered in the State of Connecticut. Its aim is to stimulate an interest in nature and science in children and adults, so that they may be better equipped to meet the challenge of our present day life.

As a member of the United Fund we receive a portion of our income from your United Fund contribution. The balance of our income must come from membership, the sale of our programs and services to public and private schools, youth groups and others and from the generous gifts of members, friends and philanthropic groups.

# YOUR OWN FAMILY NATURE JAUNT

by BOB DEWIRE

## Around a Pond in Summer

June is a quiet month in many ways. The hectic migration of birds is at an end and for the most part, territorial disputes have drawn to a close, as the business of nesting and raising a family is at hand. At this time most birds and animals become quite secretive and so many things are not noticeable to someone walking in the woods or along the shore.

Rather than taking a specific area this month, because no area can be considered outstanding in June, I thought that looking closely at a small area might be interesting. It will allow one to realize how much diversity there is in such an area. The area we will look at is a pond. This doesn't have to be any specific pond, just a reasonably large-sized body of water of which the pond at the Conn. College Arboretum is a fine example.

You should plan to visit your pond at 3 different times during the day to be able to see most of the things present, because certain animals are more active at one time than another. An early morning (8:00 A. M.), a mid-day (1:00 P. M.) and an evening trip (7:00 P. M.) are ideal.

Let's start with the early morning trip. One reason for this trip is that getting to the pond before anyone else, you have a chance to see some of the more wary animals before they are scared away. Wood ducks and green herons are often seen at this time and not again. Flowers can be noted at this time. Spatterdock, pickerelweed, button bush and others will be found. Ferns (see pg. 1 of this newsletter) will be growing along the edges. Water insects

such as striders and whirligig beetles will be on the water's surface, while several kinds of dragonflies will be found darting around the pond. A kingfisher may be present and singing birds such as red-winged blackbirds and yellow-throats will be heard.

The mid-day trip will find things quiet as far as sounds go. The insects will be very active and the warm sun will bring turtles out on the rocks in the pond. On rocks under the water there will often be many polliwogs resting. If your pond has sunfish in it, you should be able to find one guarding his hollowed-out nest on a sandy bottom along the edge of the pond. Frogs' heads will be sticking out of the water and some may jump into the water from the shore. Water lily flowers, closed in early morning and evening, will now be fully opened.

In the evening we return to a combination of sights and sounds. Green frogs and bullfrogs will be calling all around the pond. Some fish may leap out of the water to snare gnats and mosquitoes at the surface. Swallows and chimney swifts will fly around the pond also snapping up insects. A muskrat head may stick out of the water as it swims across the pond and a whippoorwill may say its name from across the bordering trees. Tree frogs will give their strange bubbly call, also from trees along the edge.



# ACTIVITIES FOR JUNE

June 1, Saturday -- 8:00 A. M. -- Family Nature Jaunt to Patchaug State Forest. Meet at Science Center Building for car caravan.

June 2, Sunday -- 2:00 P. M. -- Field trip to the Connecticut Arboretum for wildflowers and nesting birds. Meet at the entrance to the Arboretum on Williams Street.

June 5, Wednesday -- 6:30 P. M. -- Family Nature Jaunt to Barn Island to observe the residents of a marsh. Meet at the State Boat Launching Area.

June 8, Saturday -- 8:00 A. M. -- Field trip to Nehantic State Forest. Meet at the Science Center Building for a car caravan.

June 12, Wednesday -- 6:30 P. M. -- Field trip to Harkness State Park. Meet at the Harkness parking lot.

June 15, Saturday -- 10:00 - 12:00 A. M. -- Junior Workshop for grades 4, 5 and 6. Ex-  
perience in Conservation Practices. Brush piles - their construction and role in the environment of the area. Meet at the entrance to the Peace Sanctuary.

June 22, Saturday -- 10:15 - 11:30 A. M. -- Special showing of the Walt Disney True Life Adventure "The Living Desert: at the Lyman Allyn Museum Auditorium. Open to MEMBERS of the Science Center ONLY. MEMBERSHIP CARD MUST BE SHOWN. No fee.

**THAMES SCIENCE CENTER**

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**SUMMER PROGRAM**